

(Through the Bible) Amos 1-5

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon on Amos explores God's judgment against Israel and surrounding nations, emphasizing social justice and divine defense of His people.

Duration: 1:25:07

Scripture: Jeremiah 20:9, Amos 4:6-9, Amos 5:5, Amos 5:12, Amos 5:14, Acts 4:20

Topics: "Divine Judgment", "Biblical Prophecy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preparing to meet God, as everyone will ultimately stand before Him in judgment. The preacher describes a vision of all the dead, both small and great, standing before God's judgment throne. He emphasizes that no one can escape this judgment and that it will be an awe-inspiring experience to stand before the Creator of the universe. The preacher also mentions the role of shepherds and prophets in biblical times and how they were hindered from fulfilling their calling. The sermon concludes with a warning of judgment against the surrounding nations of Israel.

Transcript

Let's turn now to the book of Amos. In the first verse of Amos, he introduces himself. These are the words of Amos, who was among the herdmen, or a shepherd, at Tekoa.

Now, Tekoa is a little valley going down toward the Dead Sea from the area of Bethlehem. Actually, if you're standing on Herodion, that fortress that Herod built, sort of east of Bethlehem, looking south, you are looking into the valley of Tekoa, the area from which Amos came. He was a herdsman, and then in chapter 7, he tells us that he was a fruit picker.

He picked the sycamore fruit, which was the fig. So, he was not a prophet. He was not the son of a prophet.

He was not from a line of ministers. He was just a common, ordinary person, like all of us are. And yet, while he was there watching his sheep, God spoke to him to go up to the northern kingdom and to prophesy against them.

So, suddenly there appeared in Bethel this prophet of God, Amos, who before this was nothing more than just a shepherd, a fruit picker. And God spoke to him, and he went up and began to prophesy to the house of Israel. These are the words of Amos, which he saw concerning Israel.

Now, so often we read at the beginning of a book, the word of the Lord which came to the prophet saying. But Amos doesn't say this is the word of the Lord. He said these are the words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tokoah, which he saw.

So, it puts, of course, the divine attestation upon it here, which he saw. So, Amos saw these visions from the Lord, and he saw them concerning the northern kingdom of Israel. And these visions came to him during the time that Uzziah was the king in Judah.

So, it puts him really just a little before Isaiah. Isaiah began his prophecy at the death of Uzziah. Remember in the sixth chapter, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, sitting upon the throne, His train did fill the temple.

And Isaiah exercised his ministry mainly during the times of Hezekiah. So, during the time of Uzziah, who was a prosperous king in Judah, reigned for 52 years. And in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, the king of Israel, and then he dates the prophecy even further, two years before the earthquake.

Now, in these years, and somewhere between the year 810 and 792, there was a tremendous earthquake that devastated that whole area. An earthquake that was so severe that according to Zechariah, the people fled from that area, terrified. Isaiah makes mention of this great earthquake that shook that whole region also.

And here again, a reference to the great earthquake. And so, these prophecies that he received were a couple of years before this great earthquake. So, we can put his area of ministry somewhere around 800 BC, give or take, a few years in either side.

Jeroboam was one of the most successful of the kings in Israel as far as bringing the nation to its zenith of glory. During the time that Jeroboam was the king in Israel, Israel was very prosperous from a material standpoint. They were very rich in the material things, but they were very poor in spiritual things.

And so, Amos comes to awaken them spiritually unto God. He begins his prophecy by declaring, and he said, the Lord will roar from Zion. When Jesus Christ comes again, according to Joel, Hosea speaks about it, and now Amos also speaks about it.

He will roar from Zion. He will utter His voice from Jerusalem. And the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Thus saith the Lord. And now, God speaks of the judgment that is going to come against the surrounding nations of Israel. And in each of them, He declares for three transgressions and for four.

Now, He doesn't name four indictments against each. For three transgressions and for four is a figure of speech which just is declaring the cup of God's indignation is full and is going to overflow now in judgment against Damascus. And Damascus is the first, the capital of Syria.

I will not turn away the punishment thereof because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron. They came with their iron chariots and they destroy Gilead. I will send a fire into the house of Hazeel which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad.

When Elijah the prophet had fled from Jezebel and had hid in the cave down in the Sinai, the word of the Lord came to Elijah the prophet saying, Elijah, what are you doing here? Now, in reality, he was hiding

from Jezebel. Really wasn't doing much of anything. And he said, I've been jealous for God.

And they have killed all of the prophets of God and I only am left and they're looking for me to take my life. God, you're in trouble. You don't have anybody left representing you except me and they're out to get me.

Word of the Lord came the second time to Elijah saying, Elijah, what are you doing here? Elijah didn't understand the question the first time so the Lord repeated it. He still didn't understand it, gave the Lord the same lame answer. And the Lord said, Elijah, get up to Syria and anoint Haziel to be the king over Syria in Ben-Hadad's place.

In other words, you're not doing anything down here. I've got to work for you to do. Get out of here and get back to work now.

And God commissioned the prophet back to the ministry. Now, when he came to Haziel and went to anoint him and to prophesy over him, he began to weep. He just began to sob.

And Haziel said, what's going on? What's the matter with you? And he said, I see the evil that you are going to do to the people of God. I see you ripping up the women who are pregnant. I see the horrible, cruel things that you're going to do to the servants of God.

And Haziel said, am I a dog that I should do these things? And he was quite upset. And yet, the Scripture records that Haziel came against Israel and did do exactly these things. And because of that, now the time of judgment has come.

And for three transgressions, yea, for four against Damascus, their punishment will not really be passed by. God will surely punish them. And God speaks of the punishment, I will send a fire into the house of Haziel.

This king who was anointed by Elijah and was so cruel, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad, which was his successor who he assassinated in order to take the throne. I will break the bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Avon, and him that holds the scepter from the house of Eden. And the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kerr, saith the Lord.

Now, Kerr was in Assyria and just as God predicted through Amos here, the Assyrians came, they captured and destroyed Syria and they took those of Damascus captives to Kerr back in Assyria and thus the prophecy was literally fulfilled. Now he prophesies against the Philistines and the country of the Philistines. Now there were five major cities of the Philistines.

I think four of them come into view in this prophecy. Gaza was one of the chief cities of the Philistines and then Ekron and Ashdod and Ashkelon, the major cities there in the Philistine territory. Now, thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof.

And the indictment that God gives against them, they carried away captive, the whole captivity, to deliver them to Edom. And so in their conquering of the people of God, they turned the captives or sold them to the Edomites, their perennial enemy. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, the coastal fortress, and him that holds the scepter from Ashkelon, another coastal city.

And I will turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God. How many of you have met a Philistine lately? Now you see God's word came to pass. The Philistines were wiped out.

They don't exist anymore. Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyrus. Now Tyrus was that coastal city which was the headquarters of the ancient Phoenicians.

It was a very wealthy, prosperous and powerful kingdom. Their merchant ships ruled the Mediterranean and they carried the goods from the east to the marketplaces of Europe. Tyrus had been consistently a friend of Israel.

David and Hiram had made a covenant together which was carried on by Solomon, the son of David. And Hiram, the king of Tyre, furnished the cedars for David's palace and later for the great temple of Solomon. But in time, Tyrus also turned against Israel.

And thus the prophecy against Tyrus. Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyrus. And for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they delivered up the whole captivity unto Edom.

The same indictment that was against the Philistines. However, he adds, and they remembered not the brotherly covenant. That beautiful brotherly covenant that was made between David and Hiram.

For Hiram was a great admirer of David. But they broke that covenant that had been made. Now, as we see the judgment of God coming against these various nations around Israel, Syria, the Philistines, Tyrus, next the Edomites, and then the Ammonites, and then the Moabites.

In each case, the judgment is coming because of their ill treatment of God's people, the children of Israel. Now, God's people were in the wrong. And God was judging His people because they were in the wrong.

But God had said, you're not to touch My anointed, and do My prophets no harm. And God had said to Abraham, I will bless those that bless you, and I will curse those that curse you. And I don't care how wrong the children of God are, don't you touch them.

You know, My kids may be brats, but don't you touch them. I'll do the correction of My children. If someone else should come in and touch My children, then I rise in defense for them.

And so with God and His children, though they were wrong, though they deserved the punishment, that's something that God reserved for Himself. I'll take care of them. Don't you touch them.

And so it is, I believe, even to the present day, that God still blesses those that bless them and curses those that curse them. And when the day of judgment will come when Christ comes again, Matthew 25, and He gathers the nations for judgment, the nations will be judged according to their treatment of the nation of Israel. No nation has remained prosperous who dared to put a hand against the people of God, the nation of Israel.

I would be very, very careful about what I said or did that would be contrary to the nation of Israel. And so in each of these cases, it was because of their mistreatment of God's people that God is judging them. So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyrus that will devour the palaces thereof.

And that, of course, took place under Nebuchadnezzar. A partial fulfillment, it was completed by Alexander the Great and Tyrus was destroyed. Ezekiel gives a more complete prophecy against Tyrus describing in

great detail the two sieges of Tyrus, first by Nebuchadnezzar and later by Alexander the Great.

Thus saith the Lord for three transgressions of Edom. Now, Edom was south and east of Israel. It is south and east of the area of the Dead Sea, an area that today is pretty much barren wilderness.

I will not turn away the punishment thereof because he did pursue his brother. Now, the Edomites were descendants of Esau. Esau was the brother of Jacob.

And thus, God still looks at them as a brotherly relationship. The Edomites were really kin to or brothers to because Jacob and Esau were twin brothers. And yet, the hatred that Esau had for Jacob never ceased in the descendants.

The Edomites were the perennial enemies of Israel. Every opportunity they had, they attacked. Whenever Israel would be occupied with an enemy from the north, they'd always attack from the south.

They sought to take advantage of every situation to destroy Israel. There was a hatred constantly simmering and kindling among the Edomites. The last recorded Edomite was, of course, the house of Herod, Herod the Great and his descendants.

From then on, the Edomites have been lost from history. Herod was an Edomite. And so, God promises the judgment because they did pursue their brothers with a sword.

They had no pity. And in their anger, they tore perpetually and their wrath never ceased. So, I will send a fire upon Teman, which was, of course, the capital of Edom.

And it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah. Thus saith the Lord. And now we turn to Ammonites.

And the word Ammon is changed the pronunciation. The spelling is the same. And you have Ammon, the modern capital of Jordan.

And you have also the area of Ammon. And the Ammonites was directly east from Jerusalem across the great African rift in the area that today is Ammon. And for the transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for three and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead.

Gilead, of course, was soundly defeated by the Syrians and they came into judgment for it and now also the Ammonites. That they might enlarge their border. I thought that was interesting.

They came over into the West Bank to enlarge their borders. Times really haven't changed that much, have they? We're still having problems because Jordan was driven from the West Bank and in the 1967 war. And there's still that endeavor to again take control of the West Bank.

But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah and it shall devour the palaces thereof with shouting in the day of battle and with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. And the king shall go into captivity and his princes together, saith the Lord. And then against Moab, of which Ammon and Moab were adjacent to each other.

Thus saith the Lord for three transgressions of Moab and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof because he burned the bones of the king of Edom in lime. The desecrating of the king of Edom, throwing his body into a lime pit and allowing it to be dissolved. But I will send a fire upon Moab and it shall devour the palaces of Kiriath.

And Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, with the sound of the trumpet. And I'll cut off the judge from the midst thereof and will slay the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord. Now, having dealt with those nations round about, remember he is prophesying basically to Israel.

He'll get to Israel in a while but because Judah was also a neighbor to Israel, he prophesies against Judah, the southern kingdom. Thus saith the Lord for three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof because they have despised the law of the Lord. Now, you remember Paul tells us that they who have the law will be judged by the law.

They that have not the law will be judged apart from the law. Here's a classic illustration. It is interesting that as God speaks of the judgment that is coming against Moab and Ammon and Edom and Tyrus and the Philistine countries and Syria, that in each case He is making mention of their moral sins that are just a part of man's innate understanding and knowledge of good and evil.

God doesn't bring up the law. God doesn't mention the law. God judges them apart from the law.

Any of us realize the horrible, heinous crime of taking a sword and ripping up a pregnant woman. That's a thought that is just reprehensible to us and to all people. And so, no mention of the law is made concerning these nations unto whom God did not give the law.

They're judged apart from the law, yet judged. But to those to whom God gave the law, as He speaks now of the judgment that is going to come to them, the judgment is according to the law. They that have the law will be judged by the law.

They that have not the law of God will be judged just by that moral, instinctive, innate understanding that man has of what is good and what is right. And so with Judah, they despise the law of the Lord. They've not kept His commandments.

Their lies cause them to err, after the which their fathers have walked. But I will send a fire upon Judah and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem. Thus saith the Lord, and now He turns to Israel.

For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof. Because they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes. And so there was an oppression of the poor people in Israel.

Now, don't touch the Jews. God defends them. But also, don't oppress the poor.

Because God also defends them. Again, it is interesting how God always takes up the cause of the poor. God is interested in the poor.

And He takes up the cause. He hears their cries. And there were the oppression of the poor there in Israel.

They pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor. They turn aside the way of the meek. And a man and his father will go into the same maid to profane My Holy Name.

And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar. And they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. That is, the judges were fining the people.

And then they were using the fines to buy wines for their orgies. Drinking the wine of the condemned in the house of their God. Yet, I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the

cedars, and he was strong as the oaks.

And yet I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath. Not only destroyed the Amorites the fruit from above, but destroyed the family ties, the roots from beneath. Wiped them out completely so that you haven't met an Amorite either.

Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt and led you for forty years through the wilderness to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets and of your young men for Nazarites. But is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord? You gave the Nazarite wine to drink and you commanded the prophets to prophesy not.

So God raised up the Nazarites. Now Nazarites were men who had committed their lives to God. It was a vow of complete consecration to God.

And a part of the Nazarite vow was that you were not to drink wine. But yet here young men seeking to make this kind of a consecration to God and they were giving them wine to drink. Men who had been called by God to prophesy and they were stopping them from prophesying.

Behold I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. Now really you need to almost go over to the land and notice how they load the sheaves on the carts or on the donkeys or even upon the women to get a real picture of this. I've seen donkeys so loaded down with sheaves that it looks like a huge bundle of sheaves with four legs.

You can't see the donkey but you see this huge bundle of sheaves moving down the road and you look underneath and you see the four legs or in some cases I've seen them so laden the women down. You see two legs underneath and this huge bundle. You can't see the woman but underneath all of these sheaves someplace is a woman straining under the load.

And these carts that they have don't look that sturdy anyhow. The wheels are usually a little out of kilter and they just heap them so high with sheaves that it just presses them down. And so he is using a picturesque description which of course the people there immediately relate to because they had seen these little carts just pressed down with these huge load of sheaves and God said, I'm pressed down like a cart that's overloaded with sheaves.

Therefore, the flight shall perish from the swift. You'll not be able to flee from the judgment that is coming even though you're a fast runner. The strong will not strengthen his force neither will the mighty deliver himself.

When God starts to bring his judgment there will be no escaping. Neither shall he stand that handles the bow and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself neither he that rides the horse. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord.

So God's judgment is going to come against Israel. There will be no escaping of it. Hear this word, Amos said, that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, and against the whole family, so that it would include Judah also, which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, God now is talking to his people and it's almost a lamentation for God said, you only have I known of all of the families of the earth.

Therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities. A nation that had special privileges is also a nation that has great responsibilities. To whom much is given, much is required.

Israel had been given so much by God. What advantage then, Paul said, hath the Jew? And his answer to his own question is, much and in every way. For unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Unto them were the fathers. Unto them were the statutes and the judgments given. And he speaks of the tremendous advantages that they had because God had dealt with them as a nation, as a people.

But that only increases their responsibility to God. We look at the United States. Again, a nation that was nurtured by God, blessed by God.

America, America, God shed his grace on thee. But the fact that we have been so blessed by God only gives us a greater moral obligation to commit ourselves to God and to represent God before the earth. But even as Israel failed, so are we failing.

And when God's people fail in their responsibility, then God punishes them. And God said, I will punish you for your iniquity. And now some rhetorical type of questions that the Lord asked the people.

Number one being, can two walk together except they be agreed? Can you walk in harmony? Can you walk in unity unless there's an agreement? And of course the answer is no. Now, how can you walk with God if you're not in agreement with God? How can you walk with God and continue in iniquity, in unrighteousness, and in sin? And the answer is you can't. You cannot walk with a holy God in a state of iniquity.

Can two walk together except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? No, he roars when he has conquered the prey, when he has destroyed it, when he stands above it. Will the young lions cry out of his den if he has taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where there's been no trap set for him? No, a bird doesn't fall except there is a trap. Shall one take up a snare from the earth and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid? Putting it more into a modern terminology, can the air raid sirens go off and people not be afraid? I'll never forget when we were in Bat Yam outside of Tel Aviv during the 1967 war.

And as we were there in the hotel, just 20 minutes from Egypt by jet, and the Egyptians, of course, were across the Suez Canal and fighting in the Sinai. And in the middle of the night, about one, two o'clock in the morning, the air raid sirens began to wail. Now, we were the first major building along the Mediterranean from Egypt.

And all of our group, of course, it was a blackout, and we all made our way to the basement where there was the air raid shelter. And we had some unique experiences getting there in the dark, rousted out of the sleep. Some ladies were wanting their husbands to wait for them while they put on their makeup.

Crazy things that you do. But I'll tell you there is something that is quite terrifying. In the darkness of the night, hearing those sirens wail and knowing that it's quite possible that bombs will be falling in that very area.

Now, in ancient Israel, the sound of the trumpet was the sound of the alarm. The enemy is coming. And when the trumpets would begin to sound, the fear would grip the hearts of the people.

So the question, shall the trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid? Shall there be an evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? That is, the evil, and in this sense, as it is so often in the Old Testament, the evil of judgment. People are confused because in Isaiah, God said, Have not I created

evil? And they say, Oh, how is it that a holy God created evil? The word evil is used in the sense of having brought judgment which effect is always evil upon the people for whom the judgment came. So can there be the evil of judgment and God has not brought it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants, the prophets.

Interesting that God is saying, God is not going to work, God is not going to move, God is not going to judge, except He reveals it to His prophets. And so, before the judgment came, the prophets were warning the people that God was going to judge. The lion hath roared, and who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, and who can but prophesy? I mean, as Jeremiah, when he was prophesying, they told him to shut up.

He wouldn't do it, so they threw him in the dungeon. And there he got a case of the poor me's, and he began to complain to God about the treatment that God gave to His servant, the prophet. And he said, I was determined I wasn't going to speak anymore in the name of the Lord.

I've had it. You know, this is it. They're going to treat me like this.

I'm just not going to tell them God's word again. I'm not going to speak anymore in the name of the Lord. And he said, but his word was like fire in my bones, and I became weary trying to keep quiet.

I mean, it was just something I, you know, as Peter said when he was commanded not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus, he said, we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. You know, I'm not going to obey your commands. We can't help it.

We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. Paul speaks of the constraining love of Christ. The Lord has spoken.

How can you be silent? Who can but prophesy? So publish in the palaces of Ashdod, the Philistine city on the coast, the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say, assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, an adversary there shall be even round about the land, and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

Thus saith the Lord, as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of the bed and in Damascus in a couch. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts. Now, remember this guy is a shepherd, a herdsman, and in those days there were lions in the land of Israel.

You remember that David, when he was telling King Saul his qualifications to go out against the giant. He said, one day I was watching my dad's sheep and a lion came out and grabbed one of the sheep and started dragging away and I took and I killed the lion. And then a bear grabbed one of the sheep and I killed the bear and the God who delivered the lion and the bear into my hand is able to deliver this uncircumcised Philistine.

I'm ready to go. You remember with Samson on the road down to Timnath, the lion came out and jumped him. So, the shepherds, one of the problems that the shepherds had to deal with were the lions who would take the sheep.

And so as a shepherd it had the experience of catching a lion, but it had already devoured the sheep until there were just a couple of legs left or just a piece of an ear. And you have that disappointing experience of getting there too late to rescue the sheep. And so it is interesting how that being a shepherd he is weaving in talk of the nature, talk of, you know, the shepherds living out as they did, conscious of the heavens, conscious of the nature and things of nature.

And so speaks to the people in allegories with very natural references. Hear ye and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts, that in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel. Now Bethel is where they had established the worship of the cow, the calf worship in Israel.

As Jeroboam had set up the calf in Bethel and in Dan and the places for false gods in Gilgal and all, and the people were idolatrous in worshiping these other gods, so now God is speaking out against the altars that they had built at Bethel. In the day that I visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house and the houses of ivory shall perish." Actually, there in Samaria, King Ahab had built a beautiful palace, furnished it with ivory, and it was one of the great wonders, really, of glory and splendor and wealth, the house of ivory.

But the prophet speaks out against the house of ivory and the great houses shall come to an end, saith the Lord. Then the Lord says, Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan. They worship the calf, and so God calls them a bunch of cows.

He's referring to the people. But because they worship the calf, He speaks disdainfully concerning them, which are on the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor. Again, the oppression of the poor must have been great because God makes continual reference to it.

Who crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink. So, there is that disparity between the very wealthy and the extreme poor. That kind of disparity that is a curse and a plague to many nations, where they really do not take care of the poor with whom God is very interested.

The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness that lo, the day shall come upon you that He will take you away with hooks and your posterity with fish hooks. This literally happened. The Assyrians were extremely cruel people.

They were so cruel that history does record of many cities when surrounded by the Assyrian army, the inhabitants would commit mass suicide much as Masada, rather than to be captured by the Assyrians because they feared them because the Assyrians were accustomed to mutilating their captives. Cutting off their ears, mutilating their bodies, mutilating their faces. And one of the things the Assyrians did with their captives is that they would put fish hooks through their lips to drag them back to Assyria or through their noses or through their ears so that you'd have to keep marching.

You try to slow down and that thing begins to pull on your nose or on your lip or on your ear. And here is the prophecy, you're going to be led away with fish hooks. And so it was, the Assyrians when they captured Samaria attached to the people these fish hooks and dragged them away or led them away captive to Assyria.

The Lord God has sworn by His holiness that, Lo, the day shall come upon you that He will take you away with hooks in your posterity with fish hooks and ye shall go out at the breeches every cow at that which is before her and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord. Come to Bethel, this place where Jacob first met God and called it Bethel, the house of God. Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.

But they had made it a place of idolatrous worship, the center of their idolatrous worship in the northern kingdom. Come to Bethel and transgress at Gilgal, another place of pagan worship. Multiply transgression and bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes after three years and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven and proclaim and publish the free offerings for this, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Now, God here speaks of the judgments that He had brought against them and the purpose of these judgments was to cause them to turn to God. God oftentimes uses what we call judgments or chastisements in order to turn us from our path of destruction. Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.

Now, as long as you're a child, you don't understand that. It's not until you become a parent that you understand it. I thought my dad was just feeding me the biggest line when he would say, Son, this hurts me more than it hurts you.

I did not believe that. I thought my dad was just putting me on. Until I became a dad and I understood exactly what he meant.

The hurt that you feel when it is necessary to punish your child, but you know you must for their own sake and for their own good chastise them or else they could destroy themselves. But you don't want to inflict pain, but you know that you've got to somehow teach them the danger of their activity. And so you are forced to chastise them, though it is an extremely painful thing to do.

God, for our benefit, chastises us. And for Him, it's a painful process. God says, turn.

I don't want to meet you in judgment. I would rather meet you in mercy. I delight in mercy, not in judgment.

I know that as a parent, I always look for any excuse not to spank them. Say you're sorry. Please say you're sorry.

And I was a softy. I would let them talk me out of it with a very stern warning next time. And God doesn't enjoy chastising His children, but it is for our benefit and our good in order that we might turn to Him.

And so God brought various chastisements against the land. Oh, how we misunderstand God. Whenever a chastisement or judgment comes, somehow in our minds, we picture God as angry with us as I often picture my dad angry with me because I did not understand him.

After being chastised, I would often go in my room and I'd begin to cry and think, nobody loves me. I don't even think my dog loves me anymore. Nobody loves me, you know.

Then I wish I were dead because they would all feel sorry then if I were dead, you know. And so you think about them standing around your casket and you cry like everything. The emotional traumas of a child.

When in the Garden of Eden, after Adam had sinned, and the Lord came down in the cool of the day to walk with him, and Adam hid himself from the presence of the Lord for he realized that he was naked. And God said, Adam, where art thou? That was not the cry of an arresting policeman but the sob of a

heartbroken father. But so many times we read it, we think, oh man, you know, here he is going to wring his neck and oh, where are you? No.

You've got to read that and hear the sob in the voice. Adam, what have you done? As God could see the effect of Adam's transgression upon the whole human race, you and me included, what we have suffered and what mankind has suffered for the action of Adam. Adam, where are you? Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.

And the purpose is always to turn us to God from the path of self-destruction. God knows to continue that path is to destroy ourselves. And so God speaks of those things.

I've given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, want of bread in all of your places, and yet you did not return to me. He had allowed food shortages to develop, yet the people wouldn't turn. So I have withheld the rain.

He began erratic weather patterns. When there was yet three months until harvest, I caused it to rain on one city and not to rain on another. One piece was rained upon and the piece whereon it rained did not rain, withered.

There were two or three cities that would wander into one city looking for water, but they were not satisfied. A drought in the land, and yet, God said, you didn't return to me. And so I have smitten you then with a blasting mildew.

When your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, then the palmer worm, the locust devoured them, the medfly, the whitefly. And yet, the Lord said, you have not returned to me. And so I have sent among you the pestilence of the manner of Egypt, that is the viral infections and all.

And your young men I have slain with a sword and I have taken away your horses and I have made the stink of your camps to come up into your nostrils. And yet, you have not returned to me, saith the Lord. So I have overthrown some of you, even as Sodom and Gomorrah, fire, earthquakes, the firebrand plucked out of the burning.

And yet, you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, because they had not hearkened to these warning judgments of God, because they had not turned away from their evil deeds, therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. This is not meeting God in friendly terms, but meeting God to face His judgment.

Heavy, heavy duty. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. It is necessary and important that each of us make preparation because each of us, ultimately, one day are going to stand before God.

And I saw all of the dead, small and great, standing before the great white throne judgment of God. All of the dead. Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.

And every man was judged according to the things which were written in the book. For it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. No one can escape it.

Inevitably, inescapably, one day each of you are going to stand before God and that will be a very awesome experience because you'll be standing before the very Creator of the universe. For lo, He that

formed the mountains, God said, let the dry land appear and created the wind and declared unto man what is His thoughts and makes the morning darkness and treads upon the high places of the earth. Yahweh, the God of hosts, is His name.

Prepare to meet Yahweh, Yahweh, the God of hosts, the Creator of the universe. Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation weeping over the house of Israel now. The virgin of Israel is fallen.

She shall no more rise. She is forsaken upon her land. There is none to raise her up.

Now, some people use this verse and interpret it as though God has now cast off Israel forever and that there is to be no restoration by God of divine favor in the last days. This is to deny the whole body of Scripture. This is speaking of Israel at that time to be cut off.

They were going to go into captivity to Assyria. They were to be dispersed throughout the world. But yet, all of the prophets and even Amos here in the last chapter speaks about God's dealing and working with His people in His restoring of His love and favor in the last days.

There was none to raise her up. She could not raise up herself. Others would not raise her.

But the Bible tells us that in the last days God is going to raise her once again to a position of glory and honor as He takes her once more as a bride that has been disobedient, but yet now returned to her husband. For thus saith the Lord God, the city that went out by a thousand shall leave a hundred. They will be decimated.

A hundred will leave ten of the house of Israel. And so the great decimation that would take place and did take place in Israel. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, seek ye Me and ye shall live.

Even still, God is holding out an offer of help, an offer of hope to them. If you'll just seek Me, it can be changed. You don't have to go into judgment.

You don't have to go into captivity. If you'll just seek Me, things will be different. But yet, they would not seek Him.

But God is saying, don't seek Bethel. Don't seek the calf. The pagan worship in Bethel, nor in Gilgal.

Pass not over to Beersheba, for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity and Bethel will come to nothing. Seek the Lord, again it is repeated, and ye shall live. Lest ye break out like fire in the house of Joseph and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

The house of Joseph referring to Ephraim who was the biggest tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him that makes the seven stars in Orion. The seven stars are the seven sisters, also known as the constellation of the Pleiades.

Unfortunately, living here in this megalopolis with all of the lights and all, it's difficult for us to really appreciate much of astronomy and of the stars and of the constellations. But if you go out, no tonight it's cloudy, but even on a clear night in this area it's unfortunately hard to see. But the Pleiades is that little cluster of stars in the, well it is out in the center of the heavens, a winter constellation that is often called by novices and those who do not know the constellations, it's often called the Little Dipper.

People so often look up to the Pleiades because it is shaped like a Little Dipper and they say, oh well there's the Little Dipper. No, the Pleiades is not the Little Dipper though it may look like a Little Dipper. It is not the constellation known as the Little Dipper.

The constellation of the Little Dipper is actually up in the north and the North Star comprises a part of the Little Dipper constellation. But the Pleiades is that little cluster that looks like a Dipper in the center of the winter skies. And so when you're up at the conference center and all in the winter time, you look up and you can see, or you're out in the desert, you can look up and see the Pleiades, a very attractive constellation and one of the easiest of the constellations to identify, along with Orion, another winter constellation.

Orion is in the southern sky and it is shaped sort of like a square. You have to use your imagination a little bit. But you can see the shoulders of Orion and you can see the bow that he is holding out in front of himself.

And as you look at, well, he's not taking a good aim, he's ready to draw a bead down, I guess, because the bull that he is getting ready to shoot is below him and you can see the horns of the bull and then if you look carefully, you can see his dogs chasing him through the winter sky. As each evening, Orion goes across the south, his dogs chasing him and he's pulling down his bead on the bull out here in the southern skies of our northern hemisphere. But, again, Orion is a very fascinating constellation and an easy one to spot among the winter constellations.

Now, here's a guy who's a shepherd and, you know, he lives close to nature, out of doors so much of the time. Living close to nature, he speaks of the seven stars, the seven sisters, the constellation of the Pleiades and also of Orion. Seek him who made these constellations.

Seek him who made these stars. In the constellation Orion, the left shoulder of Orion is the star Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse.

Four hundred and fifteen million miles in diameter. If you could carve out the center of Betelgeuse leaving a crust a hundred million miles thick, you could put the sun inside of Betelgeuse and let the earth rotate around it and you'd have a few million miles to spare. The Lord who made Orion, Betelgeuse, is just the left shoulder of Orion.

The Lord who made the Pleiades and Orion. Seek Him. There are no help in these little golden calves that you have made.

There's no help in your pagan worship, in the idols that you have formed, in the gods that you've created in your own imagination. But there is help in the true and the living God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth. Seek Him.

Seek Him that made the seven stars in Orion and turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark with night and calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth. Yahweh is His name that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong so that the spoiled shall come out against a fortress. They hate Him that rebuketh in the gate and they abhor Him that speaketh uprightly.

For as much therefore as your treading is upon the poor and you have taken from Him the burden... They were ripping off the poor people. The rich were ripping off the poor. What a terrible thing.

And because you're doing this, the Lord said, you have built your houses of hewn stone. You've built your own glorious houses by robbing the poor. And so God declares because of this, you will not dwell in your houses.

You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you will not drink the wine of them. They had come to the zenith of their glory and power in the northern kingdom, but they weren't to enjoy its benefits. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins.

For you afflict the just and you take bribes. You turn aside the poor in the place of judgment. Therefore, the prudent shall keep silence in that time for it is an evil time.

God said, seek good and not evil that you may live. And so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you as you have spoken. Hate the evil and love the good.

So here we are exhorted to seek the good and not evil and then hate the evil and love the good. You remember again when Satan came before God with the sons of God in the book of Job. God said unto Satan, where have you been? He said, been going up and down throughout the earth to and fro through it.

God said, have you considered my servant Job, a righteous man, perfect and upright in all his ways, a man who loves good and hates evil. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and then it declares the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Now we are living in an age when there's all kinds of liberal pressure to not hate evil, but to tolerate evil.

And you're put down as some kind of an Archie Bunker type if you hate evil. You're made to look like some kind of a fool, a bigot, if you hate evil. And yet God's Word declares that that's the beginning of wisdom, but we're living in an age of fools.

People who love evil. People who flirt with evil. People who tolerate evil.

But to hate evil is really what the fear of the Lord is all about. Because I fear the Lord, I hate evil. And so hate evil and love the good.

And establish judgment in the gate. It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious under the remnant of Joseph. Who knows? It may be God will be gracious if you'll turn around, if you'll change.

It could be that God will be gracious. But boy, you're about ready to go down the tubes. Turn, change, seek justice.

Therefore, the Lord the God of hosts, the Lord says this. Wailing shall be in all the streets. And they shall say in all the highways, Alas, alas.

Now that is a term that just is one of total despair. Alas, alas. That means we've had it, you know.

That's just total despair. We don't use that term anymore, but it's one that just signifies really the end of the world. And they shall call the husbandman to mourning, that is the farmer, and such as are skillful in lamentation to wailing.

Now they had people who were professional wailers. They were very skillful in wailing. And so if you had a funeral service, you would hire these professional wailers who would come and just wail like everything.

And so people say, Oh my, you know, he must have been a very loved person, because listen how they're wailing. And so those that were skillful in wailing. Now my wife used to be skillful in screaming.

And it worked for some advantage. Whenever we would, in the days of the Long Beach Pike, we'd go over and ride the roller coaster. And from the moment that thing would start down the first decline, she'd start screaming.

And she wouldn't quit until we pulled up to a stop at the, you know, at the gate there. And always they'd say, You kids go again. And we got three or four free rides, because she'd attract the attention of everyone on the Pike to the roller coaster.

So man, I've ridden that thing so many times. Finally almost lost its thrill, because you go on it so many times, you get used to it. But she used to get us more free rides by her skillfulness at wailing.

And in all vineyards shall be wailing, for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord. Woe unto you that are desiring the day of the Lord. To what end is it for you? For the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light.

Here they were longing for the day of the Lord, but because of their lies, their sin, the day of the Lord wasn't going to be glory for them. It was going to be for them the day of judgment and the day of darkness. And so is the day of the Lord.

For those who are the servants of the Lord, it's a glorious day that we anticipate. Establishing of His glorious kingdom. And so there is this dichotomy involved with the day of the Lord.

There are those Scriptures that speak about a day of judgment and wrath and so forth, which it will be to those who love evil, to the wicked. But unto the righteous, a glorious day of glory. The day of the Lord is something that we do look forward to.

But unto them, because of their sins, a woe to them when the day of the Lord would come. Now, it will be as though a man was going down the road and a lion attacked him and he escaped from the lion. And he didn't go very much further until a bear attacked him.

And he escaped from the bear. And he finally gets home, exhausted having run from the lion and run from the bear. And he gets home and he's just exhausted and he leans up against the wall of his house and a snake bites him and he dies.

I mean, you're going from the frying pan into the fire. And that's the figure that Amos uses here. As if a man did flee from a lion.

And then a bear met him. And when he came to his house, he leaned his hand on the wall and the serpent bit him. I mean, you can't escape it.

Just when you think that you've escaped, whammo, you get wiped out. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light, even very dark, no brightness in it? And now God declares, I hate, I despise your feast days. Now the feast days were the times when they were supposed to come in fellowship with God.

That was the whole idea. You see, during the feast days, they were days of great fellowship with God. You would bring your sacrifice.

And the priest would offer the fat of the lamb as a burnt offering unto the Lord. But then the rest of it was barbecued and you'd sit there and you would eat with the Lord. And the whole idea was feasting with the Lord as you ate the shish kebab.

And just the whole idea was that of fellowshiping with God and feasting with Him. The people would assemble before the Lord. But God came to the place where He said, look, I hate, I despise your feast days.

They would burn the fat of the lamb and the smoke ascending is just, oh man, it smells so good. And the idea was to be a sweet-smelling savor unto the Lord. That God might smell and the marvelous smell of the lamb fat as it is being burned or roasted.

God said, I won't even smell it. Though you offer Me the burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beast.

Take thou away from Me the noise of the songs, for I will not hear the melody of the vials. God is not interested in the outward observation, or the outward observances. God is interested in a heart that is repentant towards Him.

Notice that in the offerings that they were offering, God, He didn't make any mention of sin offerings. Still offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings and the meal offerings, but no mention of sin offering. And that's the thing that God was interested in.

That they be repentant for their sin. That they turn from their iniquity. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Can a man really have fellowship with God while he's still walking in sin? And the answer has to be no.

And so all of the rest of the religious trappings are just so much wasted effort. If your heart isn't truly repentant towards God. There are too many people who are going through the motions of religion.

As Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience and how thou hast borne. And how you have been able to discover those who said they were prophets and were not. And you've put them out.

And your labor. Again, He mentions it. But He said, I have this against you because you've left your first love.

They had all the emotions, but they had lost the emotion. God was more interested in the emotional aspects than He was just the pure motion aspects of religion. Many people today going through the motions of religion, but there is no real heartfelt emotion towards God.

And God is looking for that heart that is filled with love. Love towards Him. Love towards good.

Love towards the people of God. He wants that emotional aspect. He doesn't just want religious trappings and religious surroundings and religious works and religious forms.

But He wants a heart that's on fire for Him. And so God says, I won't listen to your music. I won't smell your offerings.

I won't accept your offerings. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. That's what I want.

I want you to start living right. I want you to start being just. Start being honest and just and righteous.

That's what I desire. Have ye offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Molech, these false gods, of Chun, and your images and the star of your God which you have made to yourselves. Therefore, will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus.

And they did go into captivity beyond Damascus. They went into captivity all the way to Assyria, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts. Now at this time, Assyria was no threat to them.

Syria was the threat. Damascus was the threat at this time. Hazael the king was the big threat to them now.

But yet God says, look, they're not going to be the ones you're going to go into captivity beyond even to Assyria. And again, the marvelous Word of God, so true, you can count on it. Shall we pray? Father, help us that we will be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

Help us, Lord, to learn from the past, from the history of your people. And oh God, may we indeed come before you in truth, in righteousness, and in true judgment. God, give us a love for good and a hatred towards evil.

May we seek you, Lord, with all of our hearts, knowing in the day that we seek you with all of our hearts, that we will find you. Oh Lord, let thy Word, like a fire, burn in our hearts. And as a sword, let it divide between that which is soulish and that which is spiritual, so that we will not be caught up in a soulish relationship, but in a true relationship after the Spirit.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Shall we stand? May the Lord be with you, bless you, keep you, fill you with His love and with His Spirit, and guide you according to His good pleasure. In Jesus' name.

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